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XX.—*Sketch of the Tribes of Northern Kurdistan.* By
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THE population of Kurdistan consists of two distinct classes: the Kurds proper, who are divided into various tribes or clans, and the peasant race, called Gurans. The clans, although far less numerous than the Gurans, are the lords of the country. The clans monopolize the military and pastoral life, while the Gurans cultivate the soil, an occupation intolerable to the spirit of a true nomade. The Gurans have been supposed to represent a pre-Kurdish population, who have been subdued, but not driven out, by their invaders. The fact, however, of their speaking Kurdish, would seem to throw some doubt on this supposition; but our knowledge of the language of Kurdistan generally, and still more that of its various dialects and modifications, is so imperfect, that it would be premature at present to draw any conclusions from it.

The principal tribes met with in the neighbourhood of the road between Erzerum and Tabriz are the Jelali, the Melanli, the Shakaki, and the Haideranli. Of these the Jelali are perhaps of less purely Kurdish blood than the rest, and have intermixed with Armenians, Yezidi, and Turkoman. They seem to have come originally from a more southern region than that which they at present occupy, perhaps from Central Kurdistan. It may, indeed, be doubted whether they really represent a tribe at all, and are not rather the descendants of a mixed multitude of followers of a chief who appears to have lived some two centuries since, and from whom they derive their name. They number about five thousand tents, and are subject to the Persian governor of Maku.

Their kishlak, or winter quarters, are in villages about the little Ak Gol Lake, between the plain of Kara Aineh, Diadin, the Balyk Gol Lake, round Ararat to the Aras. Their yailak, or summer quarters, lie up the stream from Maku to the great Persian road, where they sometimes commit depredations on the caravans. The plundering season opens in May; in June it reaches its height; and it is brought to a close by interference on the part of the frontier authorities. The Jelalis are a wild set of fellows, and recognize neither sultan, nor tsar, nor shah. Their morals are degraded, especially among the settled part of the population; and a Jelali townswoman is a byword even among the Turks. Their numbers are said to have decreased since the beginning of the war of 1853-6, partly through their having migrated from the frontiers of the contending parties, and partly from the hardships entailed upon them by the struggle.

The Melanli occupy a district to the south and south-east of the Jelali, between Kara Aineh and Khoi. They are of purer

blood than the Jelali, and are said to have sprung from the Haideranli; but their manners and morals are little better than those of their neighbours. They number about two thousand five hundred tents.

The Shakaki are found between Lakes Urûmieh and Van. These and the Haideranli are the best specimens among the northern Kurds. During the last ten years many of them have adopted settled abodes, and become more humanized in their habits. They come in to buy and sell at the weekly markets held in the larger villages or towns; and many of them travel peaceably on trading expeditions with the Nestorian and Armenian caravans. This change is partly owing to the influence exerted on them, through the Nestorians, by the American missionaries established at Urûmieh.

The Haideranli, now only a remnant of a once powerful and important tribe, occupy the valley of Murad Tchai, or Eastern Euphrates, and thence stretch southwards and westwards to the northern shores of Lake Van. They divide themselves into two main branches, the eastern and the western, the former of which numbers four thousand, the latter one thousand tents. One family of the eastern branch, the Adamanli, has so far dropped its original occupation of highwaymen, as to let out beasts of burden for caravans.

Imperfect as our knowledge of Southern and Central Kurdistan still is, it would appear that among the fastnesses of those regions some less debased specimens of the Kurdish race may yet be found. But the northern tribes are on the decline; the Jelali and the Melanli, through a kind of natural process of disintegration and decay, the Shakaki and the Haideranli by the intrigues and oppression of their Turkish rulers. Of their old traditional recollections, and their own better days, a few remnants still linger among the people; and it is not without a feeling of interest that the traveller finds these wild mountaineers making a long pilgrimage to a distant southern valley, or to the shores of Lake Van, in order to lay the bones of their chief by those of his predecessors, who have lain there for many generations past.

A few traditions and songs have been picked up by the Europeans who have visited the country, but hardly possess sufficient distinctive character to offer in so slight a sketch as the present. A few bas-reliefs and arabesques, and some inscriptions in Arabic characters, are to be found on the tombs; but it would require the patient labour of a German to extract from them an intelligible residuum.

The Kurdish language is a branch of the Iranian group, although at present much intermixed with Turkish and Arabic words. The dialect spoken throughout Northern Kurdistan is

known by the name of the Revendi. It passes current in the provinces of Erzerum, Mush, Biltis, Bayazid, Kars, Erwan, and about Khoi, Urûmieh, and Maku. The other dialects, of which we have authentic information, are the Hekári, spoken in the provinces of Hekári, Buhtan, Diarbekir, and Amadia, and by the tribe Herki; the Sori, spoken by the tribes Bilbas, Bebe, Mukri, Zerze, Khosuan, in the country about Suleimanîa, Kirkuk, and as far as the neighbourhood of Bagdad; and the Khoromeki or Kurmanji, the dialect of the Duzik of Dersem. But this enumeration is probably incomplete; and its geographical limitations are certainly not accurately maintained. For instance, some literary fragments in the Kurmanji dialect were procured by Lerch from a Kurd from the immediate neighbourhood of Diarbekir.

Of the literature of Kurdistan so little is known, that we venture to give a short summary of a work by one Ahmed Khani of Bayazid, who wrote early in the sixteenth century. It is the custom of Kurds to read a portion of it at the conclusion of the daily lesson from the Koran, and it ranks highest among all similar native works.

The substance of it runs as follows: In the seventh century of the Hejireh the tribe Khaled, one of the most powerful of the Kermanji clan, settled in Jezireh under the command of Zein-ed-din. This chief had two sisters, Siti and Zin. About the same time there lived in Jezireh a Pehlevan named Iskender, who had three sons celebrated for their beauty and strength. They were all in the service of Zein-ed-din, and the eldest was in especial favour with the chief. At the time we are speaking of, it was an ancient custom to make a public procession every new year outside the city. All the inhabitants, rich and poor, great and small, men and women, took part in the festival. Although at that time it was the custom for women to wear the veil, yet on the day of the procession they laid it aside, and held free intercourse with the men. There was of course plenty of flirting, and parents looked with particular favour on matches and engagements made on this festive day. On the occasion in question, Zein-ed-din opened the procession. The young Tajjin, with his friend Mem, joined in the crowd disguised in female attire; while the chief's daughters appeared as men, and were foremost in the games at ball. The two girls happened to be near where Mem and Tajjin were standing: and love at first sight was the consequence. The lovers did not know one another; but, at such a conjuncture, female ingenuity is seldom at a loss, and in a minute Siti had exchanged rings with Tajjin, and Zin with Mem. On their return home, the young ladies take their old nurse into consultation. She has much experience in these matters, and shows the rings to a magician, who at once declares them to belong to

Mem and Tajjin. By his advice, moreover, she visits Tajjin and his friend in the disguise of a physician, and discloses the ladies' names.

Tajjin, being of noble birth, was soon united in marriage with his beloved Siti; but Mem, the son of a scribe, was far from seeing the fulfilment of his wishes. He concealed his passion as far as possible; but the quick-eyed, mischief-making Bekir, Zeined-din's porter, discovered it, and slanderous stories about the lovers soon reached the ears of his master.

The chief went out hunting one day. During his absence the lovers met accidentally in the garden; and, strolling thence into the reception hall, they were surprised by the hunting party on their return. Mem hid his lover under his mantle, and sat down between two cushions. The chief saluted him as he entered; but Mem sat still, pleading a fever as his excuse for not rising. His position, however, soon became still more critical; for the chief declared his intention of spending the night in the room. Tajjin, who had been of the hunting party, thought that something serious was the matter with his friend, and went up to speak to him. Two locks of Zin's hair, drawn out from under his robe, were enough to explain the dilemma in which Mem was placed. Tajjin immediately slipped out of the room, hastened home, and, having brought his wife and children out, he set fire to his house. The news of the fire spread in a moment; Zeid-ed-din and his followers were among the first to bring assistance; and, in the confusion, Mem and Zin managed to separate without being seen.

But Tajjin's stratagem was no secret to Bekir. He disclosed it to the chief, who, however, required further proof of the love between his sister and Mem. Bekir, never at a loss, suggested a method by which Mem should himself betray the secret. The latter was accordingly invited one day to play at chess with Zeined-din; the stake being that the loser should answer the first question that the winner might ask him. Mem lost three games. "According to our agreement, then," said the chief, "tell me who is the beloved of thy heart, that I may give her to thee in marriage?" At this moment Tajjin and his two brothers, all fully armed, entered the room. Mem hesitated about his answer. Bekir, who was standing near, noticed the hesitation, and shouted out, "I know, O chief, with whom he is in love; it is a thick-lipped negress." Mem, furious at the indignity, began describing the lady in the most glowing manner, and soon worked himself up to such a pitch of excitement, that he incautiously mentioned her name. The chief immediately commanded that he should be put in chains; but Tajjin and his brothers cried out, "As long as we live, no one shall touch him." Zein-ed-din, however, started up, tied his handkerchief round Mem's head, and sent him off to

prison. This proceeding cooled the ardour of the three brothers ; and they withdrew quietly, without interfering further in the matter.

Mem languished in prison till he was at death's door. When Bekir learnt his miserable state, he began to fear that Tajjin might take vengeance on him for the death of his friend ; so he went to the chief, and said, " I have visited Mem in prison, and found him at the brink of the grave ; he cannot last much longer. His death might give rise to some disturbances on the part of Tajjin and his followers, in which case your Highness might perhaps not come very well out of the affair. Besides which, it is not impossible that there might be a rising throughout the whole land of Buhtán." The chief was much alarmed, and asked Bekir to advise him what should be done. He counselled that Tajjin and his brothers should be conciliated by presents of robes and fair promises, by bringing Mem out of prison, and giving him in marriage to Zin. Zein-ed-din accordingly sent his sister to fetch Mem out of prison ; but as soon as he saw her, so sudden and excessive was his joy, that he died in her embrace. The whole population of Jezira participated in grief for his death ; and Bekir, the author of the mischief, did not escape the punishment which he deserved, for it happened that, at the funeral, Tajjin fell upon him and killed him with his dagger. After the funeral, at which not only the chief and his sister, but all the principal people and all the population of Jezira were present, Zin told her brother that she should not survive the death of her lover. " And now," she added, " that I am at the brink of the grave, I bear witness that our love was pure and blameless : you have done Mem a great wrong. But grant me, as my last request, three things. First, institute a festival on the day of my death, as you have done on the day of my sister's marriage, and let all the people take part in it. Secondly, that all the people of our city follow my funeral. Thirdly, that my body may be laid near to Mem's ; and, at the noment when I am let down, say these words aloud : ' With full consent I give Zin to Mem'." The next day Zin died, and the testimony for which she asked was granted.

This legend, says the Kurdish writer, is current through all Kurdistan ; and on the graves of the lovers two rose trees sprang up, which entwine their branches in token of love. At the time of the writer, the graves were a place of pilgrimage.
